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ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN THE FIELD OF WATER AND MINERAL RESOURCES, AND INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION FOCUSING ON PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Activities of the Economic Commission for Africa in the area of water resources

Note by the Secretary-General

The report of the Economic Commission for Africa in the area of water resources, available in the language of submission, is contained in the annex below.

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Annex

REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA ON ITS ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA OF WATER RESOURCES

I. WATER RESOURCES SECTOR

1. ECA programme for development, management, conservation and utilization of water resources, places emphasis on assisting member States in the areas of formulation of their national plans, policies , strategies and capacity building. Assistance is extended to sub-regional and regional intergovernmental organizations in the African region. Assistance is also directed to the promotion of inter-country and sub-regional cooperation and the strengthening of national and sub-regional capacities for the exploration, exploitation and management of water resources in a sustainable manner.

2. Towards achieving the above goals the following activities were undertaken during the biennium 1994-1995.

(i) Cooperation and liaison with international, regional and sub-regional, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations on activities related to water resources assessment, development and management in order to avoid duplication and overlapping of activities. In this regard consultations and exchange of information on water activities leading to joint implementation of projects with other UN system organizations.

(ii) An ad-hoc group meeting on policies and strategies for development of natural resources including water and energy was organized with a view to recommending specific policies and strategies to address the issues of natural resources and energy development in Africa.

(iii) A recurrent annual information bulletin on water resources in Africa was published to disseminate information and enhance exchange of experience on water development activities.

(iv) Studies were published on: a) procedures, practices, problems and prospects for small-scale irrigation systems in selected African countries, b) marine pollution problems and strategies for inter-country cooperation in alleviating those problems in line with the objectives of Agenda 21, c) problems related to sustainable development and utilization of natural resources and energy strategies for inter-country cooperation in the context of Agenda 21. The purposes of the above activities was to make an in-depth study on specific areas to provide solutions and make recommendations within the context of Agenda 21.

(v) Provision of information and services in the form of charts and posters to enhance awareness on the need for water resources conservation, management and utilization.

(vi) Advisory services and technical assistance for the development and management of

transboundary basins in Africa to strengthen existing organizations and to assist in the establishment of new ones where necessary. These activities were geared to lead to inter-country cooperation and to realize the objectives of integrated and holistic water resources planning, development and management.

(vii) Organizing the servicing group training including seminars and workshops for sustainable development of water resources in order to strengthen capacity building at the national and sub-regional levels.

(viii) Organizing and servicing the annual sessions of the Inter-Agency Group for water in Africa (AGWA) to promote coordination, and joint implementation of water activities in Africa. The group also promotes joint implementation of projects by member agencies in Africa. In March 1995, ECA and WMO jointly organized in Addis Ababa, a conference on Water Resources Assessment, Development and Management during which ECA presented a paper on the "Role of Water Scarcity and Water Stress in Addressing the Economic Challenges facing African Countries at the Dawn of the 21st Century."

3. ECA participated actively in a workshop organized by IAEA in April 1995 on isotopes technology for water resources assessment in Africa. It collaborated with UNEP in organizing an expert group meeting on the implications of Agenda 21 for integrated water management in Africa. Under a joint programming arrangement with DDSMS, ECA is planning to organize a training on groundwater software utilization.

4. At the request of the Inter-Agency Group for Water in Africa (AGWA), ECA is preparing a project document on integrated management of transboundary fresh water resources in Africa. It will analyze and diagnose possible solutions to the problems and constraints limiting cooperation on transboundary river/lake/groundwater basin development, and to promote coordination among riparian countries. The initial implementation of the project will be the organization by ECA and other interested UN agencies of an international conference in 1996.